

Message Text

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12

ACTION NEA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIOTY 5079

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS, EG, US, XF, UR

SUBJECT: INITIAL ISRAELI REACTIONS TO SOVIET-EGYPTIAN COMMUNIQUE
AND POSTPONEMENT OF BREZHNEV'S CAIRO VISIT

SUMMARY: ISRAELI PRESS SSSSESSMENT OF ANNOUNCEMTN FROM
MOSCOW FOCUS ON IMPLICATIONS FOR EGYPTIAN-SOVIET RELATIONS,
SOVIET ARMS SUPPLY POLICY, AND US NEGOTIATINGEFFORT FOR SECOND
STAGE EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI AGREEMENT. MOST COMMENTATORS ANTICIPATE
ACCELERATION OF US MEDIATION EFFORT INCLUDING PRESSURE ON GOI TO
MAKE GREATER CONCESSIONS TO FACILITATE ACHIEVEMENT OF SECOND-
STAGE AGREEMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. WHILE GOI HAS WISELY REFRAINED FROM PRECIPITATE PUBLIC COMMENT ON
SOVIET-EGYPTIAN COMMUNIQUE AND POSTPONEMEN OF BREZHNEV'S
MIDDLE EAST TRIP, ISRAELI PRESS DECEMBER 31 HAS COMMENTED
EXTENSIVELY ON THEIR POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS DOMINANT THEME IS THAT
LATEST DEVELOPMENT, WHILE NOT NECESSARILY SIGNALLING MAJOR CRISIS
IN SOVIET-EGYPTIAN RELATIONS, DO INDICATED STRONG LIKELIHOOD OF
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DISAGREEMENT ON POLITICAL QUID-PRO-QUOS FOR SOVIET MILITARY

RESUPPLY. COMMENTATORS BELIEVE THAT EGYPTIANS RESISTED SOVIET PRESSURES FOR EARLY CONVOCAION OF GENEVA CONFERENCE IN ORDER TO LEAVE DOOR OPEN, AT LEAST FOR BRIEF TIME, FOR FURTHER US MEDIATION EFFORT. ANOTHER POSSIBLE SOURCE OF DISAGREEMENT MAY HAVE BEEN SOVIET DEMAND FOR PORT PRIVILEGES FOR SOVIET NAVY. HOWEVER, COMMENTARIES CAUTION AGAINST PREMATURE CONCLUSION THAT SOVIETS WILL HOLD BACK ON MILITARY RESUPPLY FOR EGYPT. PRESS TENDS TO BE SKEPTICAL THAT REPORTED BREZHNEV ILLNESS IS RESPONSIBLE FOR POSTPONEMENT, ALTHOUGH THIS THEORY IS NOT COMPLETELY DISCOUNTED.

2. ISRAELI COMMENTARIES HESITATE TO DRAW FIRM CONCLUSIONS RE EGYPTIAN POLICY TOWARD NEXT STAGE OF NEGOTIATIONS, THERE IS TENDENCY TO INTERPRET DEVELOPMENT AS SIGN OF SADAT'S DESIRE TO MAINTAIN PRO-WESTERN ORIENTATION, HAARIV CITES US SOURCES THAT SADAT CLEAVES TO CLOSE RELATIONS WITH SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAN, AS WELL AS SUPPORT FOR US-STAGED APPROACH TO NEGOTIATING PROCESS. NOTING REFERENCE IN SOVIET-EGYPTIAN JOINT COMMUNIQUE TO CONVOCAION OF

GENEVA CONFERENCE INCLUDING PLO PARTICIPATION, COMMENTATORS BELIEVE PROOF OF EGYPTIAN ORIENTATION DEPENDS ON DEGREE TO WHICH SADAT WILL PUSH FOR EARLY MEETING OF GENEVA CONFERENCE.

3. THERE IS BROAD CONSENSUS THAT MOSCOW ANNOUNCEMENTS WILL GENERATE ACCELERATED US DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY IN NEXT SEVERAL WEEKS. YEDIDOT AHARONOT REPORTS FROM WASHINGTON THAT SECRETARY MAY INVITE FAHMY TO US BEFORE UPCOMING ALLON VISIT, AND ALLUDES TO POSSIBILITY THAT LATER MAY BE POSTPONED FOR SEVERAL DAYS TO FACILITATE THIS.

4. IN ASSESSING IMPLICATIONS FOR ISRAEL, MOST COMMENTATORS ANTICIPATE THAT US NOW WILL PRESSURE ISRAEL TO OFFER GREATER TERRITORIAL AND OTHER CONCESSIONS IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE SECOND STAGE AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT. MAARIV'S WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT BELIEVES THAT ALLON VISIT WILL INVOLVE PRESENTATION OF NEW ISRAELI PROPOSALS, AND SPECULATES THAT SOME US OFFICIALS MAY REGARD POSTPONEMENT OF BREZHNEV'S CAIRO VISIT AS SUFFICIENT COMPENSATION TO GOI TO REQUIRE ISRAELI UNILATERAL WITHDRAWAL IN SINAI. IN EFFECT, HE WRITES, SADAT HAS KEPT HIS PROMISE TO SECRETARY NOT TO RETURN

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TO "ARMS OF THE SOVIET BEAR" NOW US MUST KEEP ITS PART OF BARGAIN BY BRINGING ABOUT ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL IN SINAI.

5. COMMENT: THESE INTERPRETATIONS UNDERSCORE ISRAELI AMBIVALENCE, ON ONE HAND TENDENCY TO SEE MOSCOW ANNOUNCEMENTS AS AT LEAST PARTIAL SETBACK TO SOVIET-EGYPTIAN RAPPROACHMENT, AND HENCE BENEFICIAL TO PROSPECTS OF AVERTING NEW MIDDLE EAST WAR, AND ON OTHER HAND CONCERN ABOUT INTENSIFIED US PRESSURES ON

GOI FOR CONCESSIONS, AFTER MISINTERPRETING EVICTON OF SOVIET ADVISORS FROM EGYPT IN 1972, ISRAELIS MAY BE SOMEWHAT MORE CAUTIOUS IN JUMPING TO INSTANT CONCLUSIONS ABOUT LATEST DEVELOPMENTS-- ALTHOUGH PUBLIC OPINION HERE OFTEN IS INFLUENCED BY INITIAL REACTIONS MORE THAN BY SUBSEQUENT AND MORE THOUGHTFUL ANALYSES.

6. IN BRIEF DISCUSSION WITH MFA (EVRON) TODAY, HE SAID THEY WERE AS SURPRISED AS EVERYONE ELSE OVER POSTPONEMENT. THEY WISH TO HAVE MORE INFORMATION BEFORE REACHING ANY CONCLUSIONS ABOUT IMPLICATIONS FOR ISRAEL. WHEN ASKED ABOUT PRESS SPECULATION ON POSSIBLE POSTPONEMENT OF ALLON'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON, HE REPLIED THAT HE UNWARE OF ANY CHANGE, THAT "ALLON STILL EXPECTED TO BE IN WASHINGTON ON WEDNESDAY JANUARY 8." (NOTE: WE HAD UNDERSTOOD THAT ALLON WOULD VISIT WASHINGTON ON JANUARY 6, BUT EVRON CLEARLY BELIEVES JANUARY 8 IS DATE AGREED UPON DURING LAST ALLON VISIT.)
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